

TO: Dr. Denzil Suite, Vice President for Student Life  
FROM: John Vinson, Assistant Vice President for Student Life/Chief of Police  
DATE: September 28, 2018  
RE: Response to letter received from some WFSE members, dated 9/13/2018

As you know, UWPD is a triple-accredited law enforcement department, one of the few in the country. The department is accredited by [CALEA](#), [IACLEA](#), and [WASPC](#). These accreditations require UWPD to meet best practices in policy development, and provide proofs of compliance that the department is adhering to the high standards required by each of the accrediting bodies. Each accrediting body conducts regular audits of our policies, procedures and practices. In fact, UWPD just completed year one of the four-year review cycle for CALEA, after being reaccredited in July, 2017. All 80 standards that were recently reviewed were marked as in compliance and we will receive the year 1 report soon. UWPD is continuing to meet a high standard of excellence.

I am proud of the strong reputation UWPD has within the UW and broader community. According to a UW community survey conducted in April 2018, over 70% of the respondents were either satisfied or very satisfied with the department. In rating UWPD's overall competency, 86% of the respondents indicated they were good or very good in agency performance. Lastly, 67% felt safe or very safe, while 23% were neutral. Some respondents provided specific comments regarding their interactions with UWPD team members. The overall survey results suggest that UWPD is highly regarded within the UW Community, and the community has confidence in our ability to keep them safe.

UWPD also is highly regarded within the law enforcement community. We have other law enforcement leaders visiting our department on a regular basis to review our policies and procedures, and observe our practices.

Some members of the WFSE Bargaining Unit presented a signed letter of concern at the UW Board of Regents Meeting on Thursday, September 13, 2018. While the letter was signed by six current patrol sergeants and one lieutenant, it is clear the sentiments expressed by these members do not represent the entire membership; for instance, one sergeant who signed the letter has not been employed at the UWPD since July 31, 2018.

I am, however, surprised that these issues have been outlined in a public forum, since no issues had been discussed directly with me or any member of the executive leadership for several years. It is also important to note that since January, 2018, both Deputy Chiefs Olson and Wilson have been directly managing the day-to-day oversight of the sergeants and lieutenants, and have been meeting with them on a regular basis. The Deputy Chiefs have indicated to me that none of the issues outlined in the letter have been addressed with them. We believe many of the expressed concerns have been resolved. Nonetheless, a response is warranted.

With regard to the joint labor management meeting that was held on June 20, 2018, the comments that are attributed to me are factual. My intent during the conversation was to clearly articulate the impacts to the WFSE sergeants, if UWPD management was no longer able to utilize “Acting Sergeants” to provide necessary fill-in coverage. The information that was presented to the union steward during this meeting had been discussed on several occasions and the sergeant previously indicated that he understood the impact. I also knew sergeants would not like the change. While presenting the information to the sergeant during the JLM, I understand my tone was misinterpreted and the facts presented were taken to be retaliatory. While that wasn’t my intent, I apologize for that misperception.

Regarding the assertion of retaliation, I do not have day-to-day oversight of scheduling for the department. The department’s scheduler reviews all shift coverage needs and makes the decision based upon a variety of factors. The scheduler discusses any scheduling concerns with the Deputy Chief(s). In general, I’m not directly involved in any scheduling discussion unless there is a budget impact, and those discussions occur with the Deputy Chief(s).

In regards to hiring, HR functions were centralized within the department, effective January, 2017, led by a Director of Administrative Services and Human Resources. The goal was to streamline the recruitment and selection process, increase retention, and focus on improving morale for all of UWPD’s commissioned and civilian team members. We also implemented a new formal voluntary exit interview process. Exit interviews completed by team members who have left UWPD within the past 15 months show that a majority of them indicated morale was either good or excellent. Overall, I believe the atmosphere at UWPD is positive and many of our team members enjoy working for the department and the University.

In addition, the UWPD has revised both the Field Training Officer Program for newly hired police officers and the Communication Training Officers Program for newly hired dispatchers. These programs provide an introduction to the UWPD and an opportunity for new employees to demonstrate their competence in each of the respective areas. Before the team members are released for solo patrol or solo dispatch, they must receive a final review by the Deputy Chief(s). If an employee is not meeting standards after the appropriate training, coaching and mentoring has occurred, the employee is released from the UWPD training program.

With the start of the 2017-2019 Teamster’s contract, UWPD significantly improved our recruitment and selection strategies to increase the lateral candidate pool. UWPD was able to recruit and select outstanding officer candidates who enhance the department’s diversity and experience. All officers hired must complete a very comprehensive screening process, which includes background investigation, polygraph, psychological testing and medical exams. All officers who have been hired as UWPD team members add significant value to the UWPD and broader UW community.

UWPD's policies and procedures meet best practices regarding why and how internal affairs investigations are conducted. All complaints, received from citizens or internal complaints made against co-workers, are initially reviewed by the Deputy Chief(s), and a decision is made on whether the complaint should be handled by the patrol supervisors or if an official investigation is warranted. If an official investigation is warranted, it is conducted by one of the Deputy Chiefs, reviewed by both Deputy Chiefs, and then a recommendation is made to me.

Our department meets the training requirements for CALEA, IACLEA, and WASPC as necessary. The UWPD education and outreach team, led by our Community Engagement and Talent Development Manager, coordinates all department training. UWPD conducts and participates in ongoing training and meets the state's mandated training requirements every year. This ongoing training includes active-shooter training and other critical incident and/or crisis intervention training. UWPD was one of the first departments in the state to mandate crisis intervention training for all commissioned officers. I believe this training has decreased citizen complaints and use-of-force incidents by officers. Regarding department-wide, active-shooter training, UWPD held a full-scale exercise in December, 2016, and have another large training exercise already scheduled for December 19, 2018. This training is in addition to the ongoing technical training that is taken each year to ensure that UWPD is prepared to respond to and effectively manage an active shooter, or any violent situation on our campus. We also provide any further training necessary to officers to maintain a specific instructor certification and for professional development goals.

I would be remiss if I did not mention that the students and campus community are an important aspect to the department's holistic approach to active-shooter training; ensuring that they, too, are prepared for active-shooter or violent incidents. We listened to feedback from students and the campus community when they asked us to provide enhanced active-shooter training campus-wide by launching a 3-4 month directed training series with multiple sessions. The focus is to provide specific guidance on what to do in an active-shooter or violent situation. Our goal is to reach as many community members as possible in order to better educate them on what they might do in such situations. In 2017, we enhanced that outreach by creating a new active-shooter video highlighting the newest techniques and guidance on how to find safety and defend against these potential threats. We provide additional outreach and community engagement, through the dedicated work of our officers and civilian team members, to spread the message in each of these efforts.

The UWPD provides all of the necessary equipment for officers to perform their duties including radios, vehicles, and regular body armor, to name a few. All equipment is maintained and repaired as needed. Unfortunately, increases in equipment repair costs have significantly impacted the UWPD's budget, and thus we will have to make adjustments to cover the costs of new active-shooter tactical equipment. The equipment will be purchased and received prior to the December active-shooter training.

In terms of campus safety, UWPD currently has 29 officers, who provide adequate staffing for a high-level, public-safety service to our UW community. Of the 29 officers,

UWPD is able to provide an increased level of community engagement and training by assigning 2 personnel to the education and outreach bureau, 4 detectives to the criminal investigations bureau, and 1 detective to the Homeland Security Bureau assigned full-time to the FBI Joint Terrorism Taskforce. Up until July 30, 2018, UWPD was at 31 officers, but two officers were recently promoted to the rank of sergeant. We will commence another recruitment process in the next few weeks. I have intentionally delayed filling senior leadership positions, both sworn and civilian, due to budgetary constraints. These delays have allowed me to reevaluate a few positions as we pursue UWPD's 2020 strategic plan.

Even though our turnover has steadily decreased from 26% in 2014, 19.23% in 2016 and 13.33% in 2017, I'm hopeful that our staffing levels will stabilize. Even with increased staffing, I still expect to experience some turnover, but at a slower and lower rate.

Over the years, the UWPD has experienced significant officer turnover that has been attributed primarily to non-competitive salary and ongoing first-line supervisory concerns. The concerns have been expressed during both informal and formal exit interviews, in particular with sworn officers. In the department's first strategic plan, completed in 2012, supervisory consistency was identified as a goal. UWPD team members acknowledged during the strategic planning process that "providing employees with consistent expectations improves morale and enhances our ability to provide excellent customer service." In 2017, supervisory consistency was again identified as a continued goal and highlighted in the formal exit interviews of two lateral-entry officers who departed the department within the last year.

Last January, as part of the accountability piece of the strategic plan, I coined 2018 as "Back to the Basics" for all team members, but in particular, patrol supervisors. This was necessary because of the ongoing complaints that the leadership team continued to receive from patrol officers. With more experienced officers now working for the department, many of them have expressed more vocally their frustration with the lack of patrol supervisor consistency.

Deputy Chiefs Olson and Wilson were charged with improving consistency, and this resulted in changes to processes and procedures, which included increased accountability. Even with ongoing meetings and support from the Deputy Chiefs, the patrol supervisors have resisted making changes to improve communication with the officers and more importantly, to a consistent approach in leading their teams. Increased accountability has caused some supervisors to struggle with balancing leadership with effective management of the shifts and has created additional hostility amongst some officers and other supervisors. To that end, officers have filed informal and formal complaints against supervisors, and supervisors have filed complaints against each other. These complaints have resulted in some formal investigations.

I believe these increased accountability measures, coupled with initial contract negotiations, is possibly what triggered this coordinated complaint and demands from the WFSE members. During contract negotiations, there were some concerns expressed about how sergeants were being scheduled, and several of their initial contract proposals

were rejected. The contract discussions were resolved on Tuesday, September 11, two days prior to the letter being presented to the board. However, it was clear that the letter had been drafted days, if not weeks, prior to the start of negotiations (especially since one sergeant who signed the letter had left the department months before).

We have a high standard of excellence within the UWPD and expect all team members to perform at their best. Our goal is to ensure that we can collectively safeguard our community with P.R.I.D.E. -- Professionalism, Respect, Integrity, Diversity and Excellence. We are very thankful for all members of the UWPD who have been committed to providing a high level of service to our community.

On Wednesday, September 26, 2018, the University announced it would institute a comprehensive review of the UWPD operations, structure and culture by an independent external agent or agency. As the leader of the department, I am ultimately responsible for everything that happens within the department. I am in full support of this review. Our goal as a department is to always pursue excellence. This review will allow us to identify areas where we are doing well, and look for opportunities for continued improvement, all with the goal of enhancing the overall safety of our University of Washington community and meeting the needs of all of our UWPD team members.